Ontario Round
Table on
Environment
and Economy

Table ronde
de l'Ontario sur
l'environnement
et l'économie

Native People's Circle on Environment and Development

Draft Report

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PREFACE

This report is one in a series prepared for the Ontario Round Table on Environment and Economy. The Round Table was established in 1988 by the Government of Ontario to create a sustainable development strategy for the province. The Honourable Ruth Grier, Minister of the Environment, is its Chair.

To assist in the creation of a sustainable development strategy, the Round Table established six task forces responsible for the Agriculture and Food, Energy and Minerals, Forestry, Manufacturing, Transportation, and Urban Development and Commerce sectors. It also set up a Native People's Circle to provide the Aboriginal perspective on sustainable development.

The sectoral task forces were charged with reporting to the Round Table on how best to begin to achieve sustainability in each sector within the context of the six principles set out by the Round Table in its **Challenge Paper**. These are:

- anticipation and prevention of environmental problems;
- the use of full cost accounting;
- informed decision-making which reflects environmental impacts and long term goals;
- living off the interest and preserving our "natural capital";
- quality over quantity; and
- respect for nature and the rights of future generations.

The Round Table also asked the task forces to consult with stakeholders in developing their overall strategy for sustainable development. Through a combination of research and formal and informal meetings with stakeholders, the task forces and the Native Circle have documented the state of each sector and the options and obstacles to sustainability, as well as their recommendations for action.

The sectoral task force reports will be forwarded to the Ontario Round Table on Environment and Economy. The final recommendations will be considered by the Round Table as it prepares a Provincial strategy for sustainable development.

November 1991

To the Reader:

The Native People's Circle on Environment and Development was set up to bring an Aboriginal perspective to the Ontario Round Table on Environment and Economy. The members of the Native Circle are:

Chair **Louis (Smokey) Bruyere**, Native Consultant
Sue Anderson, Chair, Ontario Native Women's Association Environmental Committee
Doreen Cachagee, Chief, Chapleau Cree First Nation
Robert Cormier, Native Entrepreneur
Dean Jacobs, Walpole Island Heritage Centre, Round Table Liaison
Randy Kapashesit, Chief, Mocreebec First Nation
Mark Krasnick, Secretary, Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat
Margaret Sutherland, Environmental Consultant

In this report, the eight members of the Native Circle present their views on ways the provincial government can help Aboriginal people develop strong local economies, preserve the environment, and participate more fully in decisions which affect their communities.

The Native Circle acknowledges that it has not had adequate time to consult extensively with the Aboriginal community, and that this document represents only the beginning of the process of discussing sustainable development from an Aboriginal perspective. It is, however, inviting that community to comment on this draft report--in writing, or in person--to promote further discussion. Comments from the wider community will be included in the final report and presented to the Round Table and the public in December. The Round Table will refer to this final report when it prepares its overall Strategy Document.

Individual Aboriginal people, organizations, and First Nations may also present their ideas on sustainable development independently, in writing, directly to the Round Table.

If you or your organization want to meet with a representative from the Native Circle to talk about this report, please call the Round Table Secretariat at (416) 327-2032. For long distance call collect.

Please send your written comments on this draft report, by December 27, 1991 to:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sustainable development is not a new idea to Aboriginal people, who have a tradition that the land and its resources be preserved for the benefit of past, present, and future generations.

The survival of Aboriginal communities depends on their ability to create healthy local economies, based on the sustainable use of resources. Most Aboriginal communities want to achieve economic self-sufficiency by combining new with traditional ways. The success of their efforts depends on access to resources, a proprietary interest in the land, a real role in resource management, and a strong say in decisions which affect their communities. Sustainable development, first and foremost, must offer Aboriginal people--and their children and grandchildren--real choices and opportunities in the years to come.

The well-being of Aboriginal communities is integral to sustainable development. Aboriginal people have a vast and detailed knowledge of natural cycles and processes which can be applied to resource management and development. They recognize that the land has cultural and aesthetic, as well as economic, value. And their need for a healthy resource base and a healthy environment fits the overall goals of sustainable development for the province.

Section A of this report provides an overview of Aboriginal people in Ontario. Although they have different cultures and languages, Aboriginal people share a determination to preserve their unique rights and cultures, and gain recognition as a distinct society.

Section B describes Aboriginal economies as a combination of cash-generating and subsistence activities. It describes Native participation in the six sectors studied by the Round Table Sectoral Task Forces, and other important sectors. The Native Circle's key recommendations in these areas include:

- **the reestablishment of rail services to the north, guaranteed road access to Aboriginal communities, and the development of strategies to reduce the cost of goods movement into and within northern Ontario;**
- **the establishment of joint industry/Aboriginal ventures in forestry, and opportunities for Aboriginal people to bid for silvicultural and road construction and maintenance contracts;**
- **energy planning which emphasizes reduced demand and optimal efficiency, and the inclusion of Aboriginal people in planning for both large and small energy projects;**
- **adding value to and creating business opportunities from resources on or surrounding Aboriginal lands;**

- **support to trappers and other harvesters and the accreditation of these activities as professions; and**

- **full management by Aboriginal people of the fishery resource, in accordance with conservation, and continued access to all users.**

Section C describes key issues in the interaction between the environment, the economy, and Aboriginal people. The concept of ownership is foreign to Aboriginal people, who more typically think in terms of community use of land and resources, and territorial boundaries which shift from season to season. Nevertheless, in order to develop healthy economies, Aboriginal people today are looking for increased ownership of the land base and increased control over resources. The members of the Native Circle recommend:

- **increased opportunities to manage forest and other resources through new licensing procedures and the establishment of joint industry/Aboriginal ventures;**

- **the establishment, with the support of trade unions, industry, and governments, of culturally supportive hiring policies in the resource sectors;**

- **the inclusion of Aboriginal people, and the incorporation of traditional knowledge, into resource management education, the resource management planning process, and new developments including roads, mines, sawmills and hydro dams etc.; and**

- **the measurement of progress toward sustainability over the next five years through the use of indicators which reflect Aboriginal needs and concerns.**

Section D describes the legal and political issues which have an significant effect on Native communities and on local economies. These include unresolved land claims, inherent rights, and Aboriginal self-government. The Native Circle recommends:

- **inclusion of sustainable development on the agenda in government to government discussions between Aboriginal people and the Province;**

- **increased access to resources through enforcement of Aboriginal and Treaty rights;**

- **the negotiated settlement of Aboriginal land claims before new disposition of so-called Crown lands for uses including parks and resource extraction;**

- **Provincial legislation, policies and practices which respect the Aboriginal and Treaty rights of Aboriginal people as well as their inherent rights to use, manage, and protect the land and resources within their traditional territories; and**

- **funding to help Aboriginal people participate in development decisions and educate non-natives about their harvesting rights, practices, and knowledge.**

Section E highlights the themes which the Native Circle members believe must be addressed by and integrated into the Round Table's strategy for sustainable development for the Province of Ontario. These themes include the following:

- **Aboriginal people have an inherent right to self government which has been affirmed by the Province. A discussion of sustainable development is integral to discussions between the Province and Aboriginal people in Ontario. Because self-government will have an impact on all sectors, the Aboriginal perspective on sustainable development is an issue that needs further, detailed exploration.**

- **Local economic development is critical to the success of Aboriginal self-government. Aboriginal communities are advocating, however, that such development proceed on their own terms.**

- **Aboriginal people have a tradition of local autonomy. Some communities want to maintain traditional lifestyles. Some want to participate in the mainstream economy. Most want to combine old and traditional ways. The sustainable development strategy for the province should respect this diversity.**

- **Aboriginal people have an inherent right to use the resources of the land. Consideration of these rights is an important part of future resource use decisions.**

- **To ensure economic development, Aboriginal communities require more control of resources, including more direct ownership of the land base, a real role in resource management, and more participation in decision-making.**

- **Traditional knowledge is a valuable resource management tool. To take advantage of it, Aboriginal people should be included in local resource management and development decisions.**

- **Most Aboriginal people prefer self-sufficiency over welfare. Subsidies should be an interim measure designed to stimulate real economic development.**

- **Northern communities, including Aboriginal communities, make an enormous contribution to the provincial economy. Ontario needs people in the north.**

- **Current concepts of property are not completely compatible with the goal of sustainable development. The model of community use is one alternative.**

INTRODUCTION

The term "sustainable development" was coined by the UN World Commission on Environment and Development (the Bruntland Commission), which defined it as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

To Aboriginal people, this idea has a familiar ring. One of their guiding concepts is that the land and its resources be preserved for the benefit of past, present, and future generations. Native people have always lived off the renewable "interest" of the land without destroying the "capital". They have acted as stewards and treated the land with respect. For many generations, the land supplied all their cultural, spiritual, and material needs. The well-being of Aboriginal communities was closely linked to the health of the land.

Traditional practices and lifestyles are no longer an option for many Aboriginal people, especially those living in urban centres and in southern Ontario, where much of the environment has been altered or degraded by newcomers to the province in a rush to create wealth. Even in the north, activities such as mining, forestry, commercial fishing, and energy production compete with Aboriginal people for resources.

Native people have not shared equally in the wealth generated by resource exploitation. Instead, the vast majority of communities have ended up with welfare economies and few opportunities for economic development. They have also suffered from the loss of traditional homelands, reduced access to resources, and violations of their inherent right to self-government. Although Aboriginal people are the first to know about changes in environmental quality, they are the last to be consulted about its management.

Faced with these problems, Aboriginal people around the world have been meeting to talk about what sustainable development means to them in the modern context. The challenge for Aboriginal people is to create and maintain healthy local economies, based on a healthy environment and sustainable use of resources, by combining old and new ways. The challenge for the Round Table is to develop a strategy for sustainable development which helps Aboriginal people meet their own goals while promoting the well-being of the wider Ontario community.

The report of the Brundtland Commission paid special attention to indigenous peoples, noting their isolation from the larger social and economic framework. This marginalization, the report concludes:

> "is a symptom of a style of development that tends to neglect both human and environmental considerations. Hence, a more careful and sensitive consideration of their interests is a touchstone of sustainable development policy."

The well-being of Aboriginal communities is integral to a sustainable development strategy for Ontario. Aboriginal people have a vast and detailed knowledge of natural cycles and processes which can be applied to resource management and development. They can teach good stewardship and sound environmental management. They recognize that the land has cultural and aesthetic, as well as economic, value, and that development has social, cultural and spiritual aspects. And most important, their need for a healthy resource base and a healthy environment fits perfectly with the overall goals of sustainable development.

A: ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN ONTARIO

According to the 1986 Census, there are approximately 167,000 Aboriginal people in Ontario. This number includes Indians, Inuit, Metis--people of mixed Native/non-Native ancestery--and those people who reported "multiple origins"-- at least one of which was Aboriginal. Due to problems with this Census, the real number is likely higher. The Aboriginal population is growing at a faster rate than the rest of the provincial population.

The majority of Ontario's Aboriginal people live in the southern, and more developed, part of the province. Over 40 percent, however, live in Northern Ontario--where they make up a significantly higher percentage of the local population. Approximately 36 percent of Ontario's Aboriginal population lives on reserves or on provincial Crown land. There are 116 such settlements in Ontario. Twelve First Nations--or status Indian bands--have no reserve. Furthermore, land has not been set aside for the use and benefit of Ontario's Metis people and for First Nations not recognized by the federal government. Aboriginal or reserve lands are usually smaller in area than homelands or traditional territories, and may even cross over reserve boundaries, treaty areas, or national and provincial boundaries. Over one third (36%) of the total Aboriginal population in the province lives in towns and cities, in particular Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Thunder Bay, Windsor, Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury.

Ontario's Aboriginal people are highly diverse in terms of tribal groupings and organization, geographic location, and historic and legal circumstances. There are two main linguistic and cultural groups, the Algonquian and the Iroquoian. Aboriginal groups share economic circumstances which are considerably worse than those of non-Natives. They also share a determination to preserve their heritage and their unique cultural, political, legal and constitutional rights, and to gain recognition as a distinct society.

Aboriginal people are undergoing a cultural rebirth, which emphasizes the development and use of traditional languages, knowledge and practices. Language is particularly important, as it is through language that knowledge and beliefs are conceived and expressed. The preservation of Aboriginal languages is therefore vital to the survival of Aboriginal cultures. An important feature of these cultures is a strong emphasis on community, on sharing resources, and group decision-making through consensus.

B: ABORIGINAL ECONOMIES

The economies of Aboriginal people have two main components: the cash economy which consists of subsidies, wages, and income generated through business and industry; and the non-cash economy based on the use and exchange of traditional resources--including minerals, building materials, medicinal plants, foodstuffs--and other goods and services. The vast majority of Aboriginal people combine both types of activities.

Aboriginal people have a range of business and employment opportunities. Some reserves contain resources--including forests, minerals, and prime agricultural soil--which can be used as a base for the development of local businesses and industries. Many Native people have, in addition, special knowledge of commercial pursuits--such as fishing, hunting, trapping, healing and the use of medicinal plants, tanning, crafts and decorative arts--and of specific geographical areas--including the north and other remote areas--which provides business and employment opportunities in guiding, outfitting, surveying, conservation, tourism, and crafts.

Although Aboriginal people can, and do, participate in all sectors of the economy, they face a number of significant constraints in their efforts to develop healthy local economies. These include: a shortage of skills, education, and business experience; poor access to investment capital, labour markets, and commodity markets; inadequate community and commercial infrastructure; and inadequate access to natural resources and technology. They have a vital need to develop the capacity to use the financial, natural and human resources available to them. A sustainable development strategy for the province must recognize these needs if is to address the needs of present and future generations of Aboriginal people.

1. SECTORS EXAMINED BY TASK FORCES

The Round Table process includes the establishment of six sectoral task forces. Members of the Native Circle sit on each of these task forces and have made specific recommendations for these sectors of the economy.

TRANSPORTATION

A transportation system which provides access to markets, jobs, and services is a key component of a strong modern economy. Although in southern Ontario such a system can conceivably pay for itself, in northern Ontario--where populations and markets are small and far apart--it may always require subsidies.

Northerners--including Aboriginal people--rely heavily, however, on such subsidized transportation for access to local and southern markets, to medical, educational and cultural

facilities, and to other communities. Air, rail, and marine travel are especially important to remote communities with little, or no, road access. A barge system along the coast of James Bay is a financially viable way to supply these communities with goods and services. Increasing transportation costs and reductions in services have meant particular hardship to those in northern Ontario--leading, in some cases, to the relocation of people and businesses.

It is expensive and inefficient to move goods into and out of the north. Trucks which carry resources south often return empty, while northern companies must import empty shipping containers. Part of the problem lies with specialized transport vehicles. The technology exists to build truck bodies so that they can carry different types of load. Policies to encourage backhauling would reduce freight costs and encourage business to locate in the north.

Some Aboriginal communities want isolation, while others want access to transportation, for social and economic reasons. New reserves, however, may find themselves without road access. The federal and provincial governments pay for road construction to support economic development--but require such roads to benefit the wider community, not just one reserve.

The Native Circle considers access to adequate transportation to be an issue of social justice and a key component of healthy local economies. It therefore recommends that the Province:

- **urge the federal government to re-establish the southern CPR Via route from Sudbury to Winnipeg;**
- **develop, with the Federal government, cost sharing arrangements for the provision of all-weather access roads to Aboriginal communities;**
- **establish a policy on the long term maintenance of winter roads to remote communities; and**
- **develop strategies for the more efficient and less expensive movement of goods between northern communities and between northern and southern Ontario.**

FORESTRY

Most reserves in Ontario are too small to support viable forestry operations and most off-reserve Crown Land in Ontario is allocated to large industrial holders under Forest Management Agreements. This limits opportunities for aboriginal communities to develop self-sufficient forestry enterprises. Examples of aboriginal-owned forest businesses like Kiashke River Development Corporation of Gull Bay, who operated under a third party agreement on an existing FMA, are too few. The forest industry should be encouraged to develop more

tenure-sharing arrangements and the province should be encouraged to diversify its licensing procedures so that more of the forest resource is available to a wider variety of users, including aboriginal communities.

Professional, technical and management skills are needed to encourage aboriginal participation in forestry. Universities and colleges in the province should be encouraged to include in their forestry curriculum, content that recognizes this need and provides cultural support to aboriginal students enroled in these programs. An example of such a program is the Native Resources Technician Program at Sault College where distance education technology allows students to remain in their communities for a good part of the course. Industry should also be encouraged to provide cultural support in on-the-job training programs.

Aboriginal people have historically had stronger participation in the forest industry than today in many areas including logging, tree planting and fire fighting. Aboriginal communities want to build economic self-sufficiency and there are numerous ways to encourage such economic development. Favouring aboriginal communities for silvicultural contracts in their traditional territories, affirmative action hiring policies by both government and industry with the support of unions, favourable financing to allow easier access to capital, and the encouragement of joint ventures are some of the means to be tried.

Traditional aboriginal resource use has been multiple use with the forest viewed as a whole. Traditional activities of hunting, fishing and gathering require the maintenance of forest habitat and biodiversity. This traditional knowledge should be incorporated into the forest management planning process. One way of doing this is to carry out an inventory of special aboriginal sites, both cultural and sacred and/or encourage the practice of traditional land use mapping. This information should be readily available to all parties involved in resource planning. It is important for both industry and the province to seek out traditional knowledge, encourage aboriginal participation in planning, protect all uses of the forest and explore the possibility of co-management of resources in traditional aboriginal lands.

The settlement of land claims, greater aboriginal participation in decision-making with incorporation of traditional knowledge in forest management planning, economic development which provides aboriginal people with access to the forest resource, more culturally appropriate training programs, protection of traditional hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering rights, and experimentation with new forms of tenure and partnership such as co-management agreements, joint ventures and community forests are all means of providing the basis for sustainable development in forestry based on aboriginal people's full participation. The province must also ensure through education efforts that the general public fully understands the benefits to be gained by all parties in pursuing these initiatives.

The Native Circle recommends:

- **that the Province develop timber licensing procedures which increase access to forest resources for a variety of users, including Aboriginal communities;**

- **the establishment of favourable financing and enhanced opportunities for Aboriginal communities to establish and bid for silvicultural and road construction and maintenance contracts in traditional and surrounding territories;**

- **the establishment of joint industry/Aboriginal ventures in the forestry sector, including community forests and the co-management of resources on traditional Aboriginal lands.**

ENERGY AND MINES

Small hydro developments and other energy alternatives offer economic opportunities to Aboriginal communities and are important to their long-term viability.

The development of mineral resources and hydroelectric power in Ontario are areas of concern to Aboriginal people, particularly those living in the North.

Ontario currently has the highest per capita energy consumption in the world. Ontario Hydro projects that provincial demand for energy will increase over the next twenty-five years. Hydro has proposed to meet part of this demand through hydro-electric power developments, primarily in northern Ontario.

Northern power developments, however, have an enormous impact on Aboriginal people and the environment. They flood lands used traditionally for hunting, fishing and trapping, they displace communities, they lead to environmental and human health problems such as the buildup of mercury in reservoirs, and they open up the wilderness through a network of service roads and transmission corridors. What's more, critics question whether these developments are really necessary. By concentrating on energy conservation, they say, Ontario Hydro may be able to reduce or eliminate the need for them altogether.

Unlike larger Hydro developments, non-utility generation systems (NUGS), under current regulations, can proceed without going through a full environmental assessment, at the discretion of the Environment Ministry, even though they do flood Aboriginal lands.

Hydro developments must not violate Aboriginal and Treaty rights. Furthermore, Aboriginal people and others who stand to be affected by proposed hydro dams--such as those near James Bay--are asking proponents to prove the need for such developments. They are asking that their

wishes and opinions be paramount in decisions on energy development. When projects do proceed, furthermore, they expect economic benefits in the form of contracts, jobs and access to affordable electricity.

The Native Circle recommends that:

- **governments, industry and business work in partnership with Aboriginal people to develop energy options;**
- **Ontario Hydro focus more resources on reducing energy demand and optimizing energy efficiency and conservation;**
- **the government review the rules and regulations governing NUGS to include Aboriginal people in the approvals process; and**
- **Aboriginal people be included in the approval process for Ontario Hydro projects.**

Aboriginal people also work in the mining sector. Many Native communities, in addition, are located on land containing extensive mineral resources. Under a new agreement, First Nations can collect 100% of the revenues from exploitation of these resources if the Province agrees to waive its claim to half of the revenues. Development opportunities include: exploitation, processing and marketing of reserve resources; income from licences and other agreements; and joint-venture activities.

The Native Circle recommends:

- **that the Province eliminate its claim to half of the royalties from exploitation of minerals on Indian reserves.**

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

There are an estimated 241,000 hectares of prime agricultural lands on Indian reserves, much of it not currently used for agricultural purposes. Historically, Native people in the southern part of the province were agricultural pioneers and introduced numerous crops now in common use (e.g. corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, tomatoes). Even in the north so-called "wild" rice crops have actually resulted from wise Aboriginal management of the resource.

Lack of access to specialized technology has limited the ability of Native people to participate in agriculture since the post-war period. Furthermore, financial institutions cannot accept Indian reserve lands as collateral for loans. The Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario has been established to respond to this problem. It also supports agricultural activities which could

become the unique specialty of Native people--specifically the cultivation and processing of white corn and evening primrose, used in the manufacture of drugs. Other opportunities for Native people in this sector include the cultivation, management and harvesting of other speciality crops such as wild rice, market gardening, wildlife ranching, fur farming, and aquaculture.

The Native Circle recommends that the Province:

- **consult more fully with Aboriginal farmers and the Indian Agriculture Program of Ontario in developing sustainable strategies for food and agriculture;**
- **make agriculture assistance programs more accessible to those involved in wildlife ranching, fur farming, and other culturally specific forms of agriculture; and**
- **provide technical and other forms of assistance to ensure that the full potential of Aboriginal agriculture in Ontario is achieved.**

URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND COMMERCE

Although concerned about the environmental impact of cities, increasing numbers of Aboriginal people are migrating to urban centres to take advantage of social and economic opportunities. There are 65,000 Aboriginal people in Toronto, the largest single concentration in the country. Although they have no urban tradition, Aboriginal people in Ontario's larger centres have formed networks which provide support, jobs, and economic opportunities. Those in Toronto are exploring the possibility of putting into practice the principles of autonomy and self-government.

Aboriginal communities located near or adjacent to large urban centres tend to view them as opportunities to access capital and markets for goods and services provided by Aboriginal people. Almost half of the 1200 Native-owned businesses in Ontario are located in southern and eastern Ontario. Many of these business are in the retail and personal services sector, manufacturing, and tourism and recreation. Although a network of business development programs exists to serve Native people, access is generally difficult. Private sector involvement is low. The overall level of resources targeted to Native economic development is low in relation to the level of need and of opportunity, especially in rural and remote areas.

MANUFACTURING

The manufacturing sector is a source of employment, especially for the growing number of Aboriginal people living in urban centres. It presents, as well, opportunities for the manufacture and marketing of unique Native products, including: fur processing; garment design and

manufacture; Native foods, herbs and medicines; arts; and crafts. It also provides opportunities for secondary industries based on primary resources readily available to Aboriginal people, including: the manufacture of wood building materials and products; design and manufacture of leather, fur and textile goods; fish processing; the processing of traditional foods and foodstuffs; manufacture of ceramics and stone-based building materials; construction and related trades; the extraction and processing of peat; and the assembly of products and equipment.

The Native Circle recommends:

- **that governments and industry explore with Aboriginal people appropriate ways Aboriginal communities can add value to and create business opportunities from resources found within the community and its surrounding areas.**

2. OTHER ECONOMIC SECTORS

Key income-generating activities of Aboriginal people which do not fall into the economic sectors studied by the six Round Table Task Forces include trapping, fishing, and the provision of services.

TRAPPING

In 1984/85 an estimated 3,314 registered Indian trappers (not including Metis and non-status Indian trappers) in Ontario harvested furs worth approximately $2.4 million.

The wild fur harvest supplements the incomes of Aboriginal trappers, decreases dependence on store-bought food, and provides a practical link with culture and tradition. Trapping is also a prime example of an environmentally sustainable economic activity. Of the twenty different fur bearing species harvested in Canada, none is considered threatened or endangered. Harvesting keeps the numbers of fur-bearing species in balance.

A worldwide drop in demand for furs has hurt the trapping industry in Ontario. Nevertheless, local markets for fur products could be created, especially among Aboriginal people themselves. Fur ranching and processing and the manufacture of fur garments for local markets provide additional income potential.

Because trappers spend a considerable amount of time on the land, they have a detailed knowledge of wildlife populations and local environmental conditions. This knowledge could be tapped by making trappers wildlife managers and specialists in the regeneration and maintenance of habitats. Access to income supplements such as unemployment insurance would

help keep trappers on the land, while accreditation and licensing would improve trapping standards and encourage a broader role for trappers.

The Native Circle recommends that:

- **Aboriginal communities work with industry and governments to find ways of replacing imported garments with those made of local fur;**
- **the governments of Ontario and Canada recognize trapping as a legitimate profession and set up an accreditation program; and**
- **the government of Ontario support Native trappers with a statement identifying trapping as a good example of sustainable resource use and a legitimate form of wildlife management.**

FISHING

The fishery has huge cultural, economic, and ceremonial importance to Aboriginal people, who have a practical body of knowledge used for centuries to maintain species and population.

Under Canadian law, the fishery is common property, held in trust for the benefit of all. Unfortunately, common ownership has led to depletion of fish stocks in Ontario and contamination of waterways. For the public good, the Native Circle believes this resource cannot continue to be common property. Furthermore, Canadian courts have affirmed that, after conservation, the right of Aboriginal people to use the fishery resource for food, cultural and ceremonial purposes has priority over all other uses.

The Native Circle recommends that:

- **the government of Ontario recognize the inherent right of Aboriginal people to the fishery resource;**
- **the government of Ontario enter into a co-management agreement with Aboriginal people, as a transitional stage in granting them full management of the provincial fish stocks, in light of conservation, wise management, and continued access to all users;**
- **Aboriginal people be first in line for access to the commercial fishery; and**
- **Aboriginal communities be given financial assistance to develop aquaculture, fish hatcheries, fish stocking operations, etc.**

THE SERVICE SECTOR

Much of the land inhabited by Native people or adjacent to Native communities is of prime recreational quality. Native people are involved in outfitting and guiding, and the operation of tourist and other recreational facilities. Because these facilities are often in remote locations, the quality of service must be excellent to lure visitors back. Aboriginal people, therefore, need training and accreditation in the hospitality sector. The Native Circle recognizes that although the service sector offers opportunities, it is only part of the sustainability equation for northern communities.

The Native Circle recommends:

- **that the Province include Aboriginal people in the regional tourism and recreation planning process;**
- **that the Province establish an accreditation system for guides; and**
- **that the Province support training to create a stronger service and hospitality tradition.**

SUBSIDIES

Aboriginal people benefit from subsidies to transportation and other services. These subsidies are an exchange for the wealth generated in the south from the extraction and use of northern resources. Furthermore, both the federal and provincial governments provide subsidies to First Nations, individuals, and Native organizations to carry out and administer a variety of services.

The Native Circle recognizes that not all communities and activities are environmentally and economically sustainable. In many situations, local subsidies are trade-offs for broader social, environmental or economic benefits. The vast majority of Aboriginal communities, however, depend on welfare for their survival. The Native Circle believes that such subsidies are inevitable as long as those communities do not own the land base or the resources on it. Most Aboriginal communities wish to be self-sufficient. Ownership would give them access to capital and to any fees collected from outside users of the land, and an opportunity to invest in their future. Subsidies can play a positive role in the development process when they are an interim step to be phased out as communities develop their own economic base.

The Native Circle recommends that:

- **subsidies be provided to Aboriginal people as a means towards self-sufficiency and not as a substitution for real economic development.**

NON-CASH ACTIVITIES

The Round Table Sectoral Task Forces fail to touch on one of the most vital components of Aboriginal economies--their non-cash generating and subsistence activities.

Historically, Aboriginal people relied exclusively on the land for their physical, cultural and spiritual needs. Although all have retained the right to harvest for subsistence purposes, few have been able to preserve intact this traditional way of living. Most of those living in southern Ontario--with some notable exceptions--and in urban centres no longer enjoy the access to the land and resources necessary to sustain traditional activities.

But many Aboriginal people in northern and more remote areas of the province do continue to rely on traditional subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering to replace and supplement their wage incomes, for food, to confirm continuity with the past, and to reinforce spiritual values based on unity with the natural world. These people combine these activities with new ways and new economic activities.

Although a number of projects--including detailed studies of the Attawaspiskat and Muskrat Dam communities--are well under way, there is at the moment no comprehensive data on the value of subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing and gathering. A 1988 study completed for the Government of the Northwest Territories estimated, though, that 5,500 hunters, representing 4,200 households, produced approximately $55 million worth of country food a year. This figure does not include the value of other animal-based products--such as bone and fur--used domestically or marketed by individual harvesters, or the income from sport and commercial activities.

Benefits of the Non-Cash Economy

Social problems and cultural disruption in the Aboriginal community are linked with a lack of economic opportunity, unemployment, and dependence on welfare. Subsistence activities offer a viable alternative to this cycle. They reduce reliance on social assistance and provide a stable economic base. Harvesting provides access to nutritious foods, which reduces dependence on costly store-bought foods, improves the health of northerners and lowers community health care costs. Cultural values integral to subsistence, and traditions of food sharing and distribution ensure that the larger collective welfare is maintained.

Supporting the Non-Cash Economy

Official recognition that harvesting is a legitimate occupation and that harvesters are "employed" would do much to break the welfare cycle and promote the economic independence of

harvesters. This recognition could help justify entitlement by harvesters to UIC benefits, or the provision of income supplements.

A program which guarantees a minimum cash income to hunters who spend a specified amount of time in pursuit of traditional activities can generate local economic activity and benefits by putting more cash in the hands of harvesters. Thriving local renewable resource economies could stimulate the development of local markets for wildlife products, and reduce the need for other forms of economic assistance. The Omushkegowuk Harvesters' Association in Moose Factory has put forward a proposal for such an income support program.

It has been reported that in recent years there has been an increase in the number of Aboriginal people moving back to the land for both economic and cultural reasons. As well, Aboriginal and treaty rights to harvest natural resources for food, cultural, land ceremonial purposes have been strengthened significantly in recent years. These factors will likely place a greater demand on resources by Aboriginal people than in the past.

The Native Circle recommends that the federal and provincial governments:

- **recognize that harvesters and others living off the land are earning a legitimate livelihood; and**

- **provide harvesters with a minimum income supplement.**

C: ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND THE ENVIRONMENT: KEY ISSUES

The future economic and environmental health of the province depend on a new approach to the land and its resources.

The provincial government, as steward of the land and its resources, has allowed such damage to the environment as large scale clearcutting and pollution of lakes and rivers. At the same time, it has allowed some companies to reap enormous profits from the exploitation of the land and its resources. This, the Native Circle believes, is contrary to the principles of good stewardship. Good stewards of the land should ensure that the principle of conservation is paramount. They should ensure that consumptive users--including recreational and sport users--pay the true cost of such resource use. They should enhance and preserve natural resources and the quality of the environment, for all users, present and future.

Aboriginal people need access to key natural resources.

Aboriginal communities need access to an adequate land base both to sustain traditional activities such as hunting and trapping and to develop new enterprises based on the use of renewable resources. They also need some degree of control over resource use and availability. Aboriginal people are starting to develop agreements for the use of resources on so-called Crown land--once part of traditional Aboriginal territories. The Bear Island Band of Temagami has developed joint stewardship agreement with the Province for the forest of Temagami. The Golden Lake Band has established its right to fish and hunt in Algonquin Provincial Park.

The members of the Native Circle support and encourage these initiatives.

Increased Aboriginal control over natural resources can help Aboriginal economies and improve the health of the environment.

Although Aboriginal people have an inherent right of access to resources, they exercise little control over these resources. Even on reserve lands, new by-laws--and even the cutting down of a tree--must in theory be approved by the federal government.

Some communities are asserting their rights to control resource use and management. Although the federal government contests it, the Mohawks of Akwesasne have adopted a comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Law, which provides penalties for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who pollute and harm fish and wildlife. Similarly, the Mohawk Council of Tyendinaga enforces its own fishing regulations during sensitive spawning periods of the year.

The Native Circle believes that Aboriginal people have a strong interest in the health of the environment. They should play a lead role in the management of resources of historical cultural importance--including the fishery, game, cranberries, blueberries, and other traditional plant products. In the management of other resources--including trees for forestry--Aboriginal people should be co-managers with genuine decision-making powers. Resources managed by Aboriginal people would continue to be available to all, as appropriate in light of conservation and the proper practices of resource management.

The Native Circle therefore recommends that:

- **the Province develop an allocation agreement with Aboriginal people which ensures: fair access to resources, a share in the economic benefits from the use of resources, and decision-making power over resource use.**

Proprietary rights to resources provide more real economic benefits than do access rights.

Aboriginal people have always had an inherent right to harvest from the land the resources they needed to sustain themselves. At the same time, though, the government has collected taxes and fees from those who use the land and its resources. Some of these profits are manifest in the public and commercial buildings, the roads, and the wealth of southern Ontario. Aboriginal people can only realize similar benefits to their communities through a similar proprietary interest in the land. This would allow them, for example, to extract licence fees for the use of that land for recreation, industry, and commerce, and to reinvest those fees in local economic and social development, and back into development of the resource base.

The concept of private ownership is foreign to Aboriginal people, who more typically think in terms of community use of land and resources, and territorial boundaries which shift from season to season as patterns of resource use change. Nevertheless, in order to develop healthy economies, Aboriginal people today are looking for ownership of the land base and increased control over resources.

The Native Circle recommends that:

- **the government share with Aboriginal communities the funds collected from the use of resources on traditional Aboriginal lands.**

Resource extraction and development activities which harm the environment also affect the traditional Aboriginal way of life.

Because of their close relationship to the land, Aboriginal peoples often suffer directly from the

effects of a degraded environment. Development projects have destroyed wildlife habitat, fish spawning grounds or sacred sites important to Aboriginal peoples. Chemical pollutants from industry have contaminated water and marine resources. In the Great Lakes basin, individuals who consume large amounts of fish and wildlife--a group that includes the majority of Native people--have a greater exposure to contaminants posing a threat to health.

Development projects, furthermore, usually have cumulative impacts. The construction of a service road for a hydroelectric dam, for example, may increase the number of people coming into the region for sport hunting and fishing, and open up the region for mining and forestry. The environmental assessment process for development projects does not always consider these cumulative impacts, or take into account the impact of Aboriginal land use.

The Native Circle therefore recommends:

- **that the environmental assessment process consider the cumulative impacts of land use;**
- **that the representation of Aboriginal people on environmental assessment boards and as government reviewers for local projects be mandatory; and**
- **that the Province provide financial assistance, when requested, so that Aboriginal people can participate fully in development decisions and the environmental review processes.**

Giving Aboriginal people a stronger role in development decisions can have positive environmental and economic effects.

Local people are often those most informed about local environmental conditions and best suited to make decisions affecting the health of the environment. Because of their historical association with the land, Aboriginal people are in a particularly strong position to make those decisions.

Aboriginal people recognize that development projects can have positive as well as negative impacts. Because so many development decisions, however, have hurt the local environment and their communities, Aboriginal people have become strong critics of development. While not opposed to development itself, they want a say in development decisions and in the creation of strategies, plans and actions to clean up and protect the environment.

Aboriginal communities often have much at stake and much to contribute to these efforts. The Walpole Island community, for example, has worked co-operatively with industry, local municipalities and the federal and provincial governments to clean up contamination from local chemical industries. The Nishnawbe Aski Nation and other Aboriginal peoples are working out

with the Province mechanisms for sharing information and resolving conflicts over development.

Some communities--including those at Shoal Lake and Whitefish Bay--are identifying local areas of cultural, spiritual, or historical significance, and mapping out traditional traplines, and hunting and gathering territories. The Muskrat Dam community in far northwestern Ontario has worked with The University of Waterloo on a study of hunting, gathering, and fishing which identifies both the extent and intensity of land use. The 1991 Timber Management Guidelines for Ontario call for the protection of heritage resources, including traditional use sites.

Lack of financial and human resources, however, can prevent Aboriginal communities from participating in such processes. To negotiate from a position of strength and make informed decisions, these communities may require financial assistance.

The Native Circle recommends:

- **that areas of Native heritage be classed as Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest which are protected by law;**
- **that local Aboriginal people be included in planning processes for roads, pulp and sawmills, logging operation, non-utility generating systems, mines etc.;**
- **that Aboriginal communities be encouraged and financially supported to carry out their own traditional land use studies and to participate in development decisions; and**
- **that traditional land use information be readily available to all parties involved in resource planning.**

Aboriginal people need support to increase their participation in mainstream economic development.

Historically, Aboriginal people played a greater role than they do now in fishing, agriculture, and forestry. They were squeezed out of these sectors by changing government regulations and the shift towards more capital-intensive activities. One of the main barriers has been the inability of Native communities to offer up reserve land as collateral for loans. As well as capital, Aboriginal people also need professional, technical and management skills to participate fully in the modern economy.

Educational facilities are starting to provide cultural support to Aboriginal students. The Native Resources Technician Program at Sault College, for example, is based on distance education technology which allows students to remain in their communities. Laurentian University's social

work program and Lakehead University's Native Entry Into Nursing program give Native students the academic background needed to enter the regular university program. Trent University has a Native outreach program.

Industry, similarly, is starting to provide cultural support to Aboriginal employees. Dome Petroleum has initiated an employment agreement which includes seasonal shiftwork, job sharing, employment quotas, and on-the-job training. It gives Native-run companies preference in awarding service contracts.

The Native Circle recommends:

- **enhancement of the capacity of Aboriginal people, communities and businesses to take advantage of financial and employment opportunities in the resource sectors;**
- **the establishment, with the support of trade unions, of culturally supportive employment policies in the resource sectors; and**
- **that universities and colleges provide cultural support to Aboriginal students, and support to educational programs designed by the Aboriginal community to meet its own needs.**

The preservation of Aboriginal cultures and traditional knowledge has real benefits.

Aboriginal people have access to a considerable body of traditional knowledge related to the land and its resources. Much of this knowledge is empirical, experiential, and unwritten. It has been developed over centuries of close contact with the land, and has stood the test of time.

The World Conservation Strategy (WCS) recognizes the value of this traditional knowledge. "Indigenous Peoples" says the WCS:

> "have everything to gain from nature and much to offer: a profound and detailed knowledge of species and ecosystems; ways of sharing and managing resources that have stood the test of time; and ethics that reconcile subsistence and coexistence, recognize that people are an integral part of nature, and express spiritual bonds with other species, including those they harvest".

The International Union For Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources is documenting the application of traditional knowledge to improved management of soils, crops, forests, water resources and wildlife. In many cases traditional resource management systems are more effective than those imposed by government planners and managers. Other traditional systems have elements appropriate for modern resource management.

Aboriginal people apply traditional knowledge in their resource management systems and in their hunting and trapping activities. McMaster anthropologist Harvey Feit, for example, has concluded that the Waswanipi Cree of Northern Quebec hunt moose and beaver with four specific objectives in mind: to avoid resource depletion; to choose the harvesting strategy that will stabilize biological populations; to optimize labour costs of hunting; and to produce as much food as is consistent with these goals and with cultural values about work and sharing.

Feit found that Cree hunters carefully adjust their harvest in accordance with population trends. These trends are based on careful observation of the number of animal signs and sightings, the number of moose yards and beaver colonies, the sizes and aggregations of colonies, age and sex structure of residents, frequency of births, twinning in moose, and size of beaver litters.
Professional resource managers in the Northwest Territories, especially fish and wildlife biologists, recognize that local Native people often know better than "professionals" how animal populations will respond under certain circumstances. The sum total of environmental knowledge held in Aboriginal communities often far exceeds the data available from scientific studies of animal species. The preservation and application of this type of knowledge has real value--value which is still not fully realized.

Furthermore, the preservation of this knowledge depends on the preservation of Aboriginal languages--because many of the concepts involved can only be expressed through these languages. Ontario is supporting the efforts of Aboriginal people to preserve their languages by requiring schools to provide classes when the demand is there.

The Native Circle recommends that:

- **Aboriginal people be given assistance to document traditional knowledge and practices, if they wish to do so;**
- **the value of this knowledge be acknowledged, and it not be taken without permission;**
- **resource management strategies, including those for fishing, forestry, parks, and game management etc. incorporate this knowledge;**
- **universities and colleges incorporate such knowledge into resource management curricula;**
- **traditional ecological knowledge be applied to the development of roads, dams, mines, mills, non-utility generating systems, co-generating stations, forestry operations etc.;**
- **traditional knowledge be applied to the above areas by involving Aboriginal people**

in the planning process. It is more important to bring Native people into the decision-making process than it is to create a "manual" of traditional knowledge to be consulted in resource-use decision-making; and

- **that as part of the mapping of traditional sites, guidelines for the process of including Aboriginal people, and whom to consult for each particular case, be drawn up; and**

- **that the Province provide funding to educate Aboriginal youth on environmental issues from an Aboriginal perspective.**

Aboriginal people can help Ontario realize the real value of the environment.

Different cultures value the natural environment for different reasons. The dominant culture of Ontario has traditionally placed a primarily economic value on resources and on the environment. Aboriginal people recognize other values: spiritual, cultural, aesthetic and personal. Their input can help the province develop a more comprehensive picture of the real value of the environment.

When Aboriginal people talk about the environment, they talk about "The Land". The Land has a spiritual and cultural as well as a physical aspect. It includes not only the air, water, plants, animals and humans, but a corresponding responsibility to respect and protect these elements. To many Aboriginal people, traditional activities performed on the land are still integral to a sense of self. Cultural and spiritual health depends on a healthy environment. In contrast with most non-Aboriginal resource extraction activities, traditional resource harvesting strategies tend to maintain biodiversity and minimize wastage.

The Native Circle recommends that:

- **the Province provide financial assistance to enable Aboriginal people to educate non-Natives, including government, on the environmental ethic of Aboriginal people and their holistic view of the world.**

The Aboriginal population in Ontario is growing.

As a group, Aboriginal people are among the poorest in the Province. Communities with few economic options often destroy the local environment as they search for short term solutions. The Aboriginal population in Ontario is growing faster than the overall population. This, and the trend towards fuller recognition of inherent rights suggest there will be more demand on primary resources from Aboriginal people. It is important, therefore, that even the poorest of

Aboriginal communities have an opportunity to create and implement long-term strategies for sustainable development, if they wish to do so.

The Native Circle therefore recommends:

- **that the Government of Ontario establish a support fund for impoverished Aboriginal communities that wish to create and implement sustainable development action plans.**

In measuring progress towards sustainability, it is important to measure the well-being of Aboriginal people.

The well-being of Aboriginal communities is integral to sustainable development. These communities are significant users of natural resources. They have much knowledge and experience to offer the non-Aboriginal community. And finally, their need for a healthy resource base and a healthy environment dovetails with the overall goals of sustainable development for the Province. Any measurement of progress towards sustainability should therefore include indicators which reflect the well-being of Aboriginal communities.

The Native Circle recommends that over the next five years the following indicators be applied, monitored, and recorded:

- **the number of resource management agreements between the province and Aboriginal peoples;**
- **the number of Aboriginal people included on key-decision making bodies;**
- **the number of joint venture developments between industry and Aboriginal peoples;**
- **the number of Aboriginal land claims settled in the province versus the number filed and outstanding;**
- **the number of Aboriginal communities with sustainable development strategies.**

It also recommends that indicators be developed which measure:

- **the income level of Aboriginal people and the extent of their integration with local and regional cash economies;**
- **the value of subsistence activities to Aboriginal people, and to local and regional economies;**

- **the effectiveness of resource co-management agreements;**
- **the extent of documentation of traditional resource management systems and techniques; and**
- **the health of Aboriginal people.**

D: LEGAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES

Aboriginal peoples have a special legal and political status within Canada. Their access to, and control over, land and resources flow from their inherent rights and are governed by treaties and other agreements. Any discussion of Aboriginal economic development must therefore include information on:

- **Aboriginal land claims**
- **Aboriginal and Treaty rights**
- **Constitutional changes and Aboriginal self government**
- **Access to Crown land and resources**

Aboriginal Land Claims

For many Aboriginal people in Ontario, the speedy settlement of land claims is the primary development issue. Despite years of debate, and a stated commitment on the part of the Ontario government to settle these claims, most remain unresolved, while the exploitation of the land continues. Resolution of these land claims allows both Aboriginal communities and the resource industries a clearer picture of the future and an increased opportunity for long-range planning.

The Native Circle therefore recommends that the Province:

- **ensure that Aboriginal people have access to, and control over, an adequate land and resource base;**
- **ensure that prior to the negotiated settlement of Aboriginal land claims there is no new disposition of so-called Crown lands for any uses including parks and resource extraction; and**
- **ensure that Aboriginal land claims are negotiated government to government and are not unduly delayed by third party interests.**

Aboriginal and Treaty Rights

Many Aboriginal groups have negotiated treaties which establish reserves and affirm their inherent rights to hunt, fish, and trap on Crown land. Most treaties in Southern Ontario were established before Confederation. The rest of the province is covered under five treaties

established as late as 1930.

Other groups rely on traditional Aboriginal rights to use and occupy the land and harvest its resources. Although the Crown, through the federal and provincial governments, has a Constitutional obligation to protect and uphold these rights, Aboriginal people have not always found it easy to exercise them.

An Aboriginal treaty should not be considered an economic equation through which communities receive financial compensation for the loss of their lands and resources. They imply, in contrast, that if development projects proceed in traditional Aboriginal territories, they must meet with the consent and permission of the people--Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal--most directly affected.

In the landmark 1990 Sparrow decision, the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that Aboriginal people have first priority, after conservation of the resource, in the allocation of all fishery resources for food, social, and ceremonial purposes. It also stated that Aboriginal people must be consulted prior to decisions which might interfere with traditional fishing rights, and that the government must justify any legislation that interferes with Aboriginal rights protected under the Constitution. The Native Circle suggests that the traditional rights supported by the Supreme Court extend to other Aboriginal activities, including hunting and trapping, the harvesting of wild rice, other natural foods, trees, and medicinal products.

While no formal agreements exist as yet, the current Ontario government has made a commitment to negotiate with Aboriginal people agreements regarding the use and management of provincial Crown land and resources.

Currently many non-Native people do not understand or are misinformed about the rights of Aboriginal people to harvest wildlife in the province. Others simply refuse to accept that Aboriginal people have these rights.

The Native Circle recommends that:

- **all Provincial legislation, policies and practices respect the inherent right of Aboriginal peoples to use, manage, and protect the land and resources within their traditional territories, expressly recognize the priority of Aboriginal and Treaty rights;**

- **the Province provide financial assistance to Aboriginal peoples to educate non-Natives about their harvesting rights, practices and knowledge; and**

- **the Province explore ways of setting out this information on hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses.**

Aboriginal Self Government

Aboriginal people seek to confirm their historic authority to make the decisions which affect their lives, their economies, and their futures. Before they can easily exercise this authority, though, the provincial and federal governments must acknowledge the inherent rights of Aboriginal peoples to self-government, and negotiate the transfer of the necessary resources and power. Aboriginal communities will also have to develop new skills and a proprietary relationship with the land.

Aboriginal people are asking the federal government to entrench this right to self government in the Constitution, through changes to the Constitution Act of 1982.

The Statement of Political Intent signed between the Province and the Chiefs on Ontario is a necessary and welcome first step in the process towards self-government. It recognizes that the First Nations in Ontario have an inherent right to be self-governing within the Canadian Constitution.

The signing of this Statement implies a new political reality--that the Aboriginal people of Ontario are another order of government--and a new approach to the management of land and resources. Any development plan, including the provincial strategy for sustainable development, should therefore begin with the notion of this government to government relationship. It is no longer appropriate for proponents of development to view Aboriginal people as just another stakeholder.

The Native Circle recommends:

- **that government to government negotiations explicitly include a discussion of sustainable development;**
- **that as an interim measure, the Province negotiate with Aboriginal people to transfer a range of powers to Aboriginal people to the limits of Provincial jurisdiction; and**
- **that in future negotiations with the Ontario government include Metis and non-status Indians in agreements similar to the Statement of Political Intent.**

Access to Crown Land and Resources

The ability of Aboriginal people to protect their cultures, sustain their economies, develop businesses and create employment, depends largely on a healthy local environment and adequate access to land and resources. Not all Aboriginal groups in Ontario, however, have a reserve

set aside for their use and benefit. Other Aboriginal people have only a limited land base. Many of these communities--particularly those located in the North--are bordered by provincial Crown lands. Forestry, mining, and hydro-electric developments on these lands interfere with traditional land-based activities such as hunting, fishing and trapping. At the same time, they provide inadequate employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The Native Circle recommends:

- **that the Province enter into arrangements with Aboriginal people for the co-management of natural resources on Crown land.**

E: A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR ONTARIO: KEY THEMES

Although they share a vision of development based on the sustainable use of renewable resources, Aboriginal people speak from different vantage points. Some communities want to maintain a traditional way of life, and value the land primarily for its hunting, fishing, and trapping potential. Some strive for full participation in the cash economy through wise management and use of local resources and new, innovative economic options.

Most want to create healthy local economies by combining new and traditional ways. Although committed to the preservation of traditional ways, for example, the Cree community at Big Trout Lake and the Tyendinaga Mohawks operate computer training centres. The Walpole Island First Nation is creating a strategy which combines subsistence with business, tourism, and other cash-generating activities. A sustainable development strategy for the province must support the need of Aboriginal people to maintain their cultures and create real options for themselves, their children, and their grandchildren.

To many Aboriginal people, sustainable development implies social, cultural, and spiritual, as well as economic well-being. To ensure this vision, the Native Circle believes that the Round Table must address and include these issues in its Strategy Document.

Aboriginal Self Government

Native people have an inherent right to self-government. This right has been affirmed by the government of Ontario. Although the details have not been worked out, self government implies the political process must emphasize government to government negotiations with Aboriginal people. The Native Circle believes a discussion of sustainable development is integral to this government to government process. Because Aboriginal self government will have an impact on all sectors of the economy, sustainable development from an Aboriginal perspective is an issue that needs further, detailed, exploration.

An Aboriginal Vision of Development

Local economic development is critical to the success of Aboriginal self-government. Aboriginal communities are advocating that local development proceed on their terms, that they determine what is viable and participate fully in the planning and development process.

Respect for Diversity

Aboriginal people have a tradition of local autonomy. Different communities have different visions of sustainable development. Some want to maintain traditional lifestyles. Some want to participate in the mainstream economy. Most want to combine old and new ways. The sustainable development strategy for the province should respect this diversity. It should not inhibit or control the development aspirations of Aboriginal people.

Inherent Aboriginal Rights

Aboriginal people have an inherent right to use the resources of the land for food, cultural, and ceremonial purposes. These rights have been upheld by Canadian courts. Consideration of these rights will likely be a more important part of future resource use decisions.

Increased Ownership and Control

In order to ensure a healthy resource base, Aboriginal communities require more control over it. This means increased community ownership of the land base, a real role in resource management, and increased participation in development decision-making. Proprietary rights, such as the ability to collect license fees, would provide Aboriginal communities with revenues to reinvest in their communities and in development of the local resource base.

Supporting Traditional Activities

Activities such as fishing, hunting, and trapping play a key role in the economies of many Aboriginal communities. They also have a key cultural and ceremonial significance. Most Aboriginal people want to be able to continue these traditional activities now and in the future. To do so, they need continued access to the land, and policies--such as income supplements--which encourage individuals to practice these activities.

Working in the Mainstream Economy

Some Aboriginal communities and individuals want to participate in mainstream economic activities. Their key needs in this area have been identified as: education and skills training; access to investment capital; access to labour and commodity markets; improved community and commercial infrastructure; access to technology; and access to natural resources. These needs must be provided for in the sustainable development strategy for Ontario.

Settlement of Land Claims

There are many outstanding land claims in the Province. Resolution of these land claims would allow both Aboriginal communities and the resource industries a clearer picture of the future and an increased opportunity for long-range planning.

Aboriginal Population Growth

The Aboriginal population of Ontario is growing at a significantly faster rate than the rest of the population. This implies that in order to exercise their inherent rights, Aboriginal people will require a larger resource and land base. The sustainable development strategy for Ontario should take this shift in demand for resources into account.

Effects on Non-Native Population

Aboriginal ownership and control of resources will mean changes in the quality and quantity of access for non-Natives. The Native Circle suggests that in the long term, all users will benefit from the Aboriginal focus on conservation and the improved management of resources.

The Value of Subsidies

The Native Circle recognizes that not all communities and activities are environmentally and economically sustainable. In many situations, local subsidies are valid trade-offs for broader social, environmental or economic benefits. A sustainable development strategy for the province must recognize the positive role of subsidies.

The End of the Welfare Economy

Although most Aboriginal people want to develop strong local economies and self-sufficient communities, the vast majority of communities survive on welfare. A sustainable development strategy for the province should ensure that subsidies are a means towards self-sufficiency, not a substitution for real economic development.

Northern Ontario

Northern communities--including Aboriginal communities--make an enormous contribution to the provincial economy. Ontario needs people in the north. "Moving south" is not a solution.

The Value of Local Decision-Making

Local people are often those best suited to make decisions about the use of resources in their communities. Because of their historical relationship with the land, Aboriginal people are in a strong position to make such decisions. A stronger voice for local decision-makers gives added assurance that the quality of the environment will be maintained.

A New Concept of Property

The experience in Ontario suggests that nobody has been responsible for the well-being of land considered to be common property. The institution of private property creates a society of "haves" and "have nots". A new concept of property and control and use of the land base may be more compatible with the goals of sustainable development.

The Value of Traditional Knowledge

Because of their historical relationship to the land, Aboriginal people have a detailed knowledge of local environmental conditions. This information is of great value to resource management. It is often not recorded, but is based on experience. Aboriginal people should therefore be included to the greatest extent possible in local resource management and development decisions.

Developing a New Relationship With The Land

Aboriginal people traditionally view human beings as part of the land. Human wellbeing reflects the health of the land. Human beings have a collective responsibility for the wellbeing of the land. The land has spiritual and social significance as well as economic value. Aboriginal people see this vision as key to the stewardship role implied by sustainable development.

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